

Stories

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Pastoralists build resilience through PMP



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When the wet years come back, we will be ready for them. The soil and ground cover will be better, the saltbush and bluebush regenerated, and it will all be able to cope with more rain with reduced erosion.

James Kerr, Buckleboo Station, Gawler Ranges

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Pastoralists in South Australia's Arid Lands communities have been re-energised by a four-stage Property Management Planning (PMP) program designed to help them respond and adapt to climate and market changes.

PMP is a core activity of the Building Pastoral Sustainability (BPS) Project, a partnership between pastoralists and the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board to increase the uptake of technologies and strengthen the links between primary production, business management and natural resources.

Project coordinator Cherie Gerlach says Property Management Planning combined with BPS grants for on-property works are encouraging people to think differently and plan more strategically.

In the first year of the program, six pastoral businesses from the Gawler Ranges and the Marla Oodnadatta, Marree Innamincka and the North Flinders districts have started the PMP process.

“There's a real energy when everyone comes together for the workshops. They're a diverse group, all from very different landscapes, and this provides a chance to learn from each other and work on their businesses outside of the everyday routine,” says Cherie.

A requirement of the PMP program is that everyone in the business must participate in all four stages, including husbands, wives and adult children in a family partnership, or the managing director if the business is a company.

In stage one participants considered their personal business drivers and set a direction for their business. In stage two they received a detailed Ecologically Sustainable Rangelands Management plan, tailored specifically for them by consultant Richard Marver, based on property visits and discussion about landscape function, pasture identification, erosion control and grazing management.

Stage three completed in March 2021 saw each property work with chartered accountants to develop a financial plan and participate in a group financial workshop. The fourth and final stage of the program is an 'Action Planning' workshop combining the work of the first three stages.

GRANTS SUPPORT ON-GROUND TRIALS AS PART OF PROJECT

The BPS project also includes grants funding to support properties to undertake trials, demonstrations and on-ground works that showcase technologies and management practices not yet widely adopted in the arid lands.

One of the first projects funded was an ambitious whole-of-station regeneration plan at Buckleboo Station in the Gawler Ranges. To restore native grasses and perennial

bush impacted by grazing, the property has been sub-divided into six areas that will be grazed for three months, then rested for up to ten months.

Manager James Kerr says the country is already recovering. Soil probes inserted to one metre indicate more moisture in the ground than expected, and new watering points have been added to allow for more even grazing of each area.

Learning from, and with peers is a strong focus of the BPS, supported by expo-style field days, 'sticky beak' days and training. Applications for another six properties for the PMP program will open on 1 July 2021.

SA Arid Lands Landscape Board is proud to be partnering with consultants, pastoralists and communities to strengthen the skills of landholders and ensure a sustainable future.

Funded by: The Building Pastoral Sustainability Project is supported by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

LEARN MORE

➔ www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/Projects_and_Partners/Projects/building-pastoral-sustainability-program